

(Washington, DC) Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) spoke at the Winter Meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly in Vienna, Austria on February 25, calling for the OSCE to proactively reach out to help Mediterranean countries in transition to democracy. Congressman Hastings is the Ranking Democratic Member of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, commonly referred to as the U.S. Helsinki Commission, and serves as the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs. **(Please find attached a copy of Congressman Hastings' complete statement).**

The meeting of more than 230 parliamentarians participating from 53 countries debated the situation in the Mediterranean, where OSCE Partners for Co-operation Egypt and Tunisia both have seen their governments fall in recent weeks.

"This debate is inspired by the courage and dignity of the people in Tunisia, Egypt, and throughout the Mediterranean region," Hastings said. "Others in the region are motivated as well and are making their voices heard – from Tehran to Tangier to Tripoli.

"These are challenging and uncertain times but also hopeful in their opportunity. I believe it is incumbent upon all of us, the OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly, to reach out to our Mediterranean Partners and offer assistance, not only in election organization and monitoring, but regarding democratic institution building as well."

With representatives from Algeria, Egypt, Israel Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia in attendance, Hastings called for swift action to help countries looking to transition to democracy. He said parliamentarians should assist in building democratic institutions in the region through more than election observation and encouraged development of bilateral relationships to ensure that revolutions on the streets lead to lasting stability in governments.

"We face dire circumstances of regional food insecurity and energy unreliability if we do not act decisively," Hastings further noted. "We should understand the sense of urgency on the part of change agents to move forward as quickly as possible.

“Clearly, one cannot have a democracy without free and fair elections. But an election does not by itself a democracy make. What is needed is the rule of law, an independent judiciary, free media, respect for the rights of minorities, and conditions that encourage economic investment.

“I recommend that participating States and the Lithuanian Chairmanship should be proactive in drafting proposals for support before being asked. I intend to work hard both in the United States Congress and as President Efthymiou’s Special Representative on Mediterranean Affairs to provide any assistance needed by our colleagues in Egypt and Tunisia – and all of our Mediterranean partners – as they seek to meet the aspirations of their people.”

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings serves as Senior Member of the House Rules Committee, Ranking Democratic Member of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, and Democratic Chairman of the Florida Delegation.

###

 [Hastings - OSCE PA Mediterranean Debate 25Feb2011.pdf](#)